

56-1439



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District

Other names/site number: Second Office Building, Guest House

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 134 and 148 Hamlet Avenue

City or town: Woonsocket State: RI County: Providence

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

|   |             |              |
|---|-------------|--------------|
|  | DEPUTY SHPO | 21 JUNE 2017 |
| Signature of certifying official/Title:   |             | Date         |
| RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION + HERITAGE COMMISSION                          |             |              |
| State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government                                 |             |              |

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)

*for Elsan H. Beall* \_\_\_\_\_ *8.7.17* \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public – Local   
Public – State   
Public – Federal

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**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>2</u>     | <u>0</u>        | buildings  |
| <u>2</u>     | <u>3</u>        | sites      |
| <u>4</u>     | <u>3</u>        | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
|              |                 | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility  
COMMERCE/business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE  
SOCIAL/civic  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire

GEORGIAN REVIVAL/Other

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, stone, concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District comprises the two surviving buildings of the Lafayette Worsted Company plant: a Guest House (ca. 1920) and a Second Office Building (1923). The district also includes two segments of a handsome fence comprised of steel pickets and brick posts that once extended along access points into the complex from Hamlet Avenue. The former complex of fifteen buildings, built out between 1899 and 1948, was substantially demolished by the City of Woonsocket in 2008 when it acquired the property. The two extant 1½-story buildings are located on the north side of Hamlet Avenue on a 1.5-acre parcel, a portion of the large land holdings of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hamlet Mill and, after 1899, Lafayette Worsted Company. The district is bounded on the south by Hamlet Avenue, on the west by the former railbed of a New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad (NYNH&H) spur line and a densely-settled residential area, and on the east and north by the Woonsocket Middle School. The two buildings are sited at the southwest corner of the school property. The Guest House, subject of a ca. 2010 rehabilitation, possesses excellent integrity. Although generally intact, the Second Office has seen considerable moisture penetration, mostly through the roof at the northeast corner, resulting in significant interior deterioration. Some open windows have also contributed to damage of historical fabric.

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## Narrative Description

### Inventory

#### Lafayette Worsted Company Guest House<sup>1</sup> (ca. 1920, contributing) 134 Hamlet Avenue

**General.** This is a south-facing, 1½-story, 3-bay brick building of irregular plan,<sup>2</sup> resting on a raised basement and measuring 28' x 22' overall. While the design of the building is predominantly Georgian Revival, there are French Colonial Revival and Second Empire influences.<sup>3</sup> Sited at the far southwest corner of the former factory property (the current Woonsocket Middle School property), the building originally housed visiting representatives from Lafayette Worsted's parent company in France. The City of Woonsocket acquired the property in late 2007 or early 2008 and undertook restoration of the building ca. 2010.

The walls of the Guest House present a uniform surface of monochrome brick relieved by brick quoining at each corner. The foundation is concrete. The side gambrel roof is surfaced in slate with a low, raised parapet and sheet copper coping. The front entrance, occupying the easternmost bay, is set in a segmental arch opening; it comprises a paneled, six-light door with simple molded trim and an arched hood integrated into the cornice and supported by scrolled wooden consoles. A paneled rear door, also set in a segmental arch opening, has a six-light window.

First and second-floor windows on the south and east walls are set in segmental arch openings. Narrow, paired, 5-light French doors with substantial, granite sills occupy the two westernmost front bays of the first floor facade. These rise to the height of the main front entrance. East elevation windows on both floors are double-hung, 6/6, original wood sash. These sills are also granite. The two front, wood-frame, pedimented dormers are segmentally arched with a key and flatsawn scroll trim. A single rear dormer is of comparatively plain design. Windows within all three dormers are wood-frame, 6/6 double-hung. The segmental arch of the dormers is echoed in the arched hood over the main entrance. There are two rectangular windows on the rear (north) elevation; one is double-hung 6/6 and the other, over the rear entrance, is double-hung 3/3. There

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<sup>1</sup> About 2008, as the bulk of the Lafayette Worsted complex was being demolished, the Guest House was incorrectly identified as a guard house. This name has subsequently been repeated in documentation and media coverage. In response to this, a former employee of the company notified researchers of the error; however, the guard house name persists in use among some outlets.

<sup>2</sup> The building is not rectangular; the west wall is skewed to follow the alignment of a former railroad spur line, now removed. The northwest corner of the building joins a high concrete embankment associated with this rail line.

<sup>3</sup> It is arguable that this combination of influences speaks to the French ownership of the company and the company's historical association with the Marquis de Lafayette and his role in the American Revolution.

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are no windows on the west elevation, likely due to the building's proximity at the time of construction to a rail spur line (no longer extant).

**Interior.** The first floor comprises two main rooms: a 12' x 22' conference room and a 12' x 11' kitchen (with adjacent bathroom remodeled in 2010). The front entrance opens into the conference room, which extends the full width of the building. Walls are flat plaster with natural finished two-panel doors, trim and mopboards. The kitchen, the stairwell, and both the up- and downstairs hallways are wainscoted with hard-pine beadboard. Although interior treatments are generally understated in this building, of particular note is the wainscoted kitchen with original hard-pine, glass-front cabinets and an original porcelain sink. The size of this kitchen was reduced in the recent rehabilitation project with some loss of cabinetry in order to accommodate the construction of a larger (roughly 5' x 12') modern bathroom along the north wall. Original beadboard was saved and reused in the construction of this bathroom. Floors throughout are maple; the conference room and upstairs bedrooms are wall-to-wall carpeted.

The second floor comprises three bedrooms. The southwest bedroom measures 8'-square; the southeast bedroom measures 12' x 12'; the northeast bedroom measures 9' x 14'.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, the hallway wainscoting is natural finish pine beadboard, but this extends to the full wall height in the lower stairwell leading to the rear door. Bedroom walls are plain plaster with natural finished two-panel doors and mopboards.

Unoccupied since rehabilitation, the building is owned by the City of Woonsocket and will soon be leased for use as a youth center.

**Second Lafayette Office** (1922-3, contributing)  
148 Hamlet Avenue

**General:** Designed by Woonsocket architect Walter F. Fontaine, this is a 1½-story, brick, center hall plan office building on a granite foundation and raised basement (with partial sub-basement). The building measures 50' by 64'. Executed in a highly-elaborated Second Empire style, white glazed brick and limestone are used as trim and decoration throughout. On each elevation, end bays are contained within shallow, full-height pavilions. The mansard roof is sheathed in slate with a heavy, dentiled wooden cornice. A low brick kneewall above this cornice is topped with a secondary molded cornice and is broken by wall dormers (described below).

The principal entrance is centered on the west end of the building and is accessed by a double-sided granite stairway with a decorative iron railing. This entrance is contained within a one-story projecting bay with angled sidewalls, each containing a single-pane sidelight over a wood panel, and a double-leaf door with lancet windows surmounted by a tripartite transom (eight lights in the center flanked by two lights on each side). The projecting exterior bay is mirrored in

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<sup>4</sup> These are approximate overall second-floor dimensions. Because these rooms are within the pitch of the gambrel roof, there is considerably less usable space than indicated by overall dimensions.

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the interior, creating a shallow octagonal vestibule that opens into a spacious lobby. The floor of this vestibule is tiled in a pattern of grey and white hexagonal and square tiles.

Before 1911, the Lafayette Worsted Company built a tunnel system connecting (east to west) Mill No. 1, the combined First Office/Machine Shop, and Mill No.3 (all fronting on Hamlet Avenue). With the construction of the Second Office and Mill No. 4 in the 1920s, the company extended the tunnel system to pass below the Second Office and continue west to Mill No. 4. The only surviving segment of this tunnel system is a 12'-wide by 64'-long shaft serving as a sub-basement for the Second Office. At the time of demolition of the complex, the two ends of the tunnel were capped with concrete block and poured concrete (See Figure 2).

**Fenestration:** First floor windows are wood frame and set in rectangular openings. The upper sash is a complex configuration of three tiers of lights: two horizontal rows of three, four, or six lights (depending on window width) above a row of two lights. The operable lower sash is a single light (some first floor lower sash are missing or broken; these have been replaced with plywood inserts). Precisely milled lintels and sills are limestone. The lintel has a projecting cornice, and the sills are molded. Brick wall dormers set in the slope of the mansard have rectangular, 8/1 wood frame, double-hung windows set in a segmental arch opening. On the east elevation, three similar windows are grouped within one wall dormer flanked by two chimneys. On the south (Hamlet Avenue) elevation there are two operable wood-frame, *ovale debout* windows centered on the roof's lower slope.<sup>5</sup> Basement windows are all wood-frame. Those on the west elevation are 3/3 double-hung sash; on the north elevation are 3-light fixed sash; on the east elevation are 4/4 double-hung, and on the south elevation are 6/6 double-hung.

**Ornament:** The building has an ornate polychrome decorative scheme with white-glazed brick and limestone used as trim and decoration throughout. From the bottom of the building to the top, this includes: two flat, limestone beltcourses in the basement level under a flat, limestone water table between the basement and first floors; limestone-bordered, rectangular panels under each window, filled with brick save for a flat, recessed, limestone square in the center; on the ground floor at the top third of the windows, a decorative band composed of two rows of glazed white brick enframing a repeating pattern of simplified Greek crosses, each comprised of a single stretcher flanked by upper and lower headers; the same band-and-cross pattern repeated at the tops of each corner pilaster capital; at the base of the top floor, just above the cornice, panels of a checkerboard pattern of white and red brick headers; two, single-course beltcourses on the dormers, the lower course terminating at a brick shoulder with a copper-clad scroll; lintels of alternating rowlock and soldier bricks in the dormers; and bands of white glazed-brick headers at the tops of the chimneys.

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<sup>5</sup> In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century an enclosed, elevated walkway was extended between the center of the west elevation lower slope of the mansard and the large mill building to its immediate west (labeled "Mill No. 4" in Figure 1). In the course of this construction, an oval window centered over the main entrance was removed. Since demolition of the neighboring mill and the walkway, this opening has been poorly protected from weather.

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### **Interior**

**First floor, general:** There are five main rooms, two small utility rooms and two tiled bathrooms. Ceilings throughout are about 14' in height. Although it is difficult to discern because of later covering, original floors appear to be uniformly white and grey terrazzo. Original electric lamps were replaced in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with current fluorescent fixtures. The doors, molded chair rails, window trim and mopboards are natural-finished brown oak.

Interior doors are glazed in the upper half and paneled below. Within the lobby, ornate doors entering into the North and South Middle Offices are surmounted by a large, nearly square, fixed transom and flanked by double-hung sash. Muntins are arranged to form narrow panes at the perimeter of the sash, and the sash are filled with either clear or obscured glass. The transom and side windows are united within a molded oak frame with an eared architrave. The side windows rest on the oak chair rail.

**Lobby.** From the main entrance, a shallow vestibule opens into a lobby. Within this room an enclosed, oak-trimmed chamber housed a reception desk, now removed. Lobby walls combine oak paneling and marble wainscoting. Single doors are oak paneled with square windows and transoms; a double-leaf door with lancet windows leads into the building's central hallway. This hallway provides access to four of the five main rooms.

**North and South Executive Offices:** At the end of the center hallway are two mirror-image 14' x 20' rooms dominated by tile-front fireplaces with oak Colonial Revival trim. Windows are trimmed with molded oak. While the south office has been comparatively protected, the north office has significant damage to ceiling, walls and floor due to water penetration from the roof.

**North Middle Office:** This is a roughly 19'-square room dominated by three oak-trimmed windows on the north elevation of the building. An intact, oak-trimmed dumb waiter provides communication with the vicinity of a substantial bank vault in the basement below.

**South Middle Office:** This is a roughly 20' x 25' room dominated visually by an ornate door and surround (described above) providing communication to the center hall. Three large, double-hung windows look out onto Hamlet Avenue.

**Bathrooms:** At the east end of the hallway, an 8'-wide by 5'-deep executive bathroom has white ceramic wall tiles and a marble stall. At the northwest corner of the building and accessed from the lobby is a more modest bathroom likely used by clerical staff.

**Second floor.** There are four rooms likely used as administrative space by Lafayette Worsted Company. Three of these have relatively modern partitions that appear to date to the 1950s, during the tenancy of a manufacturer of architectural aluminum components. Similar to the first floor, oak doors, mopboards and molding are found throughout. A mix of rectangular 8/1 double-hung and oval windows provide light. A short hall over the entrance lobby led to an elevated



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walkway connecting the office to neighboring Mill No. 4. Contemporaneous with the demolition of the mill building, this walkway, built sometime before 1964, was removed. The construction of this walkway required the removal of a central oval window (visible in Figure 3). Much of the space of this floor is littered with failed ceiling plaster and metal lath.

**Stairway:** The building's interior stairway is located off the north side of the central east-west hall. From the first floor, it leads down to the north elevation entrance, basement, and sub-basement (tunnel), and up to the second floor. It comprises a simple balustrade of square metal posts capped by a wooden rail. Endposts are metal with a simple recessed panel.

**Basement:** The basement is for the most part an open space. A walk-in safe and the lowest station of the dumbwaiter are found along a central corridor. As noted above, the sub-basement, approximately 12' wide and running the length of the building, is all that survives of a tunnel system that connected several buildings of the Lafayette Worsted complex.

### **Contributing Structures:**

**Guest House Fence (ca. 1920).** A roughly 40-foot-long, low concrete retaining wall topped by a steel picket fence extends easterly from the southwest corner of the Guest House. At the west end, the fence has an original, 20-inch-square and seven-foot-tall, banded, brick pier with a nine-inch-thick, molded, flat-topped, pink granite cap, and is integral with the building's southwest corner and foundation. The fence has pickets that are one inch square, 70 inches tall, and pointed. At the east end is a brick pier 32 inches square in plan, approximately 12 feet tall, and made up of three parts: a three-foot tall concrete base; a six foot tall brick main portion, and an approximately three foot tall, pink granite cap made up of an approximate two-foot diameter ball finial atop a molded cap. This section of fence originally terminated at a gate providing access to an alley along the west wall of Mill No. 4, now demolished. While the pier at the east end of the gate was damaged beyond repair, its cap was salvaged and installed on the new pier described above. A sidewalk approximately 15 feet wide separates the pier from a matching pier to the east, also a reconstruction. This eastern pier has a short modern fence attached at its east end, terminating in a shorter, new pier.

**Fence/Wall at Second Office (ca. 1922).** Extending from the southeast corner of the Second Office is a 13-foot-long section of fence and wall that once formed part of an entryway into an alley to the east of the building. The wall, built atop a concrete footing, is approximately ten feet long and five feet tall, including an eight-inch granite coping topped with a run of one-inch-square, 40-inch-high, pointed, steel pickets. The fence terminates in an approximately eight-foot-tall, 26-inch-square, brick endpost with a five-inch-thick, plain concrete cap.

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**Non-Contributing Structures:**

*Three other sections of fence are located on the site. None of these are considered to be historic:*

- Piers and fence east of Guest House Fence: across the sidewalk from the east end of the Guest House Fence is a new pair of brick piers connected by a short run of new fence. The west pier of this section of fence is near the historic location of the eastern pier of the gate for an entrance to the complex (see Figure 3). The pier is topped with the granite cap and ball finial that stood on the original pier. This fence section was constructed ca. 2010 as part of the landscaping for the new middle school.
- Piers and fences at middle school entrance drive: on either side of the entrance drive to the middle school campus are ornamental fences, each consisting of a tall and a short brick pier with a concrete cap, joined by a short section of steel picket fence and with a second section of fence at a 90 degree angle (parallel to the driveway) to simulate a gate. These were constructed ca. 2010 as part of the landscaping for the new middle school.
- Planter at Second Lafayette Office: extending to the west from the southwest corner of the building is a brick planter that began its existence as a fence/wall section. Originally similar to the existing fence/wall at the southeast corner of the building (see Figure 3), the brick wall was altered at some point to be a planter. It is considered non-contributing because of a lack of integrity.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1920-1955

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

Ca. 1920

1923

1955

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Walter Francis Fontaine (1871-1938), architect of Second Office Building

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The two buildings that comprise the Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District are significant under **Criterion A** in the areas of industry and community planning and development at the local level. They are surviving artifacts of Woonsocket's

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“Second Industrial Revolution,” a transformative period of massive Franco-Belgian investment in worsted spinning that extended from ca. 1900 through the 1920s. Three major companies predominated during this period: Lafayette Worsted Company, French Worsted Company (NR 2008, demolished), and Jules Desurmont Worsted Company (NR 2007). Of these three companies, Desurmont’s is the only complex that retains a manufacturing building – it also retains its office building and guard house.

The Lafayette Worsted Company Guest House and Second Office Building are also significant under **Criterion C** in the area of architecture. The Guest House is the only example of this type of building known to have existed in Rhode Island. Rather than being a purely utilitarian industrial building, the level of ornament and character of this small building is an expression of the company’s care in the design of its facilities. The Second Office is a fine example of a late Second Empire commercial building and an expression of corporate pride in the period of Franco-Belgian investment in Woonsocket worsted manufacture. The building was designed by Walter Fontaine, a well-known Woonsocket area architect who practiced from 1903 until his death in 1938. This was one of a number of buildings and improvements carried out by Fontaine for Lafayette Worsted Company between 1909 and 1923.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The incorporation of Lafayette Worsted Company in 1899 represented the first significant Franco-Belgian investment in the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century woolen and worsted industry of Woonsocket, a transformative period that has been called the city’s “Second Industrial Revolution.” The origins of this massive infusion of European capital can be traced to the efforts of Aram Pothier (1854-1928), a native French speaker who emigrated to Woonsocket from Quebec in 1870, serving as a Rhode Island Commissioner to the 1889 *Exhibition Universelle de Paris*, which commemorated the centennial of the French Revolution. While in Europe, Pothier investigated the well-established woolen and worsted industries in the French cities of Roubaix and Turcoing and the Belgian city Verviers. He used his travels to promote investment in Woonsocket as a means of circumventing the McKinley Tariff, a levy exceeding 48% on some imports, which was to become law the following year. Along with the obvious financial appeal of skirting this punishing tariff, Woonsocket offered tax incentives as well as a sizable French-speaking workforce with a history of resistance to trade unionism.<sup>6</sup>

William McKinley, who entered the U.S. House of Representatives in 1876, had long been an advocate of high tariffs to protect American businesses from foreign competition. In 1890, he introduced a bill known as the McKinley Tariff, which dramatically increased the tax rate on a wide range of imports. The subject of much debate and rancor in the economically troubled

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<sup>6</sup> A mule spinners strike at Lafayette Worsted in 1905 suggests that this historical resistance to trade unionism among French-Canadian workers was tenuous.

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1890s, the tariff bill was passed shortly after McKinley became president in March of 1897. The incorporation in Rhode Island of Lafayette Worsted Company in October 1899 gave this new company unfettered access to the American market and was the first example<sup>7</sup> of large-scale European investment in Woonsocket as a direct response to the tariff. So began a huge European textile investment in Woonsocket--the successful integration of French-speaking management, French wool and worsted yarn spinning technology, and a Francophone workforce.

Likely named in recognition of the military service to the American Revolution by the Marquis de Lafayette, Lafayette Worsted Company was established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Auguste Lepoutre et C<sup>ie</sup> of Roubaix, France. By the 1890s, the company employed well over 1,000 operatives in what was predominantly a weaving operation. While in Roubaix in 1889, Aram Pothier met with the Lepoutre interests to encourage them to invest in Woonsocket.<sup>8</sup> In February 1899, the parent company sent engineer and mill designer Charles Loridan<sup>9</sup> to the United States to find a location and prepare plans for a large “French system”<sup>10</sup> steam-powered spinning mill. This system was different from the Bradford or “English” system of worsted spinning in several ways, the most significant of which was the sorting of wool fibers by fineness, rather than length. Worsted cloth, as opposed to traditional wool, has a smoother, more level surface. This fabric, ideal for suitings, had been growing in popularity since the Civil War era.

The site that Loridan chose for the Lepoutre facility was along the Blackstone River in the Hamlet section of the city and north of the then-standing mill for which the area was named. By 1898, the Hamlet Mills Company sold most of its assets to Pycott Manufacturing Company, a New Jersey corporation; however, this transaction did not include about six acres on the north side of Hamlet Avenue. In 1899, Loridan purchased the six acres, which was relatively

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<sup>7</sup> The woolen and worsted investments of the various facets of Joseph and Theophile Guerin’s Guerin Spinning Co. (dating to 1893) are distinct from this process in that the Guerins came to the United States from Belgium with little capital but a high level of technical expertise. Joseph Guerin, who had emigrated to Woonsocket in 1891, was spinning worsted yarn in Woonsocket by 1893 under his own company name in the Sayles and Prendergast mill on South Main Street.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Thomas Bicknell, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations: Biographical*. (NY: The American Historical Society, Inc. 1920): p. 378.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Loridan was graduated from the *Grand Ecole Nationale Superieure d’Arts et Metiers* in Paris. Starting out as an engineer, he developed an interest in worsted spinning and was retained by the Lepoutre interests to design a complete mill, the success of which induced the company to make him general manager. It was in this capacity that he was sent to the United States to secure a site, design and manage an American subsidiary. He remained with Lafayette Worsted Company until 1901, at which time he formed Loridan Worsted in partnership with Ambrose Feely, then Judge of the Woonsocket District Court. The original Loridan plant was established in Providence. Shortly after, the company was relocated to Woonsocket where a new plant was built along the Blackstone River just north of Lafayette Worsted and the River Spinning Co. plants, both demolished.

<sup>10</sup> The distinction between the French and English (or Bradford) system of wool spinning is discussed in *The Book of Rhode Island* (1930, p. 177) and Alton Thomas, *Woonsocket: Highlights of History* (1976), p. 109.

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undeveloped except for a sizable two-story mansion, the former residence of Frank Harris, who had become sole owner of the Hamlet Mill in 1889.

Late in 1899, articles of association were drawn up for the Lafayette Worsted Company.<sup>11</sup> Officials were Andre Simonis, President; Auguste Lepoutre, Vice President; Pierre Mali, Treasurer; and Dexter B. Potter.<sup>12</sup> Mill engineer and architect Charles Loridan was secretary and superintendent. Loridan, who had been boarding at a hotel in Woonsocket, relocated to reside in the Harris house in 1900 to oversee operations on site. It is likely that part of the house was used for administrative space as well as lodging for visiting executives of the parent company.<sup>13</sup>

Although the earliest form of the Lafayette plant has been attributed in historical accounts solely to Charles Loridan, records maintained by the office of Woonsocket architect Walter Fontaine (1871-1938)<sup>14</sup> suggest that he had a major role in the design of the complex. The original plant comprised a four-story mill building, powered by an adjacent boiler and engine house. Fontaine's records describe a "Mill (First building), cubage 108,002 cu. ft." designed for Lafayette. Mill No.1, which opened in 1900, comprised four floors plus basement, containing 14,400 sq. ft. of space per floor with a ceiling height of approximately 14'. These figures correspond to the volume of Lafayette Mill No. 1.

When Lafayette Worsted produced its first yarn in 1900 the main factory building was a brick, four-story, pier and spandrel structure with wood-frame segmental arch windows, a style typical of the architecture of New England textile manufacture. Although Charles Loridan ended his association with Lafayette Worsted in 1901, Walter Fontaine continued to provide architectural services for the company into the 1920s.<sup>15</sup>

Lafayette Worsted underwent significant expansion in its first two decades of operation. In 1909 the company retained Walter Fontaine to design a second mill (Mill No. 2) for weaving and finishing. This building, also fronting on Hamlet Avenue, was similar in design and scale to Mill No. 1. Office functions in the very early years appear to have taken place in the former Frank Harris mansion. In 1911, Lafayette built a single-story office and machine shop in the space

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<sup>11</sup> *Acts and Resolves of the General Assembly*, May Session 1900, p. 90.

<sup>12</sup> Potter's role in the company was unspecified.

<sup>13</sup> After Lafayette Worsted purchased the property, the mansion was used as a dwelling for the plant superintendent, a use that continued into the 1920s. The mansion also might have served as an office as well as lodging for visiting executives from the parent company in France. By 1922, the superintendent's house was surrounded on three sides by a group of joined wool storage, combing and carding buildings, as well as an adjacent coal pile. It was likely demolished ca. 1923 to make room for an industrial building.

<sup>14</sup> *Records of the Architectural Office of Walter F. Fontaine*, photocopy of MSS on file, Rhode Island Historical Society. Fontaine established a partnership with architect Elmer Kinnicut in 1903. This partnership lasted until the latter's death in 1910. Fontaine's records do not indicate whether Kinnicut had a role in work carried out for Lafayette Worsted during the years of the partnership.

<sup>15</sup> Loridan was replaced by Henri Dursin (1866-1936), who was sent by the Lepoutres to take on the role of secretary and general manager of the mill. He and his family also resided in the former Harris Mansion.

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between the two multi-story manufacturing buildings. Additional buildings erected during this period included a 2<sup>nd</sup> Boiler House designed by Fontaine and a carpenter shop. By the early 1910s the Lafayette Worsted complex comprised 50 worsted combs and 18,000 spindles, providing employment to 550 operatives.

As part of a general expansion of the plant, Lafayette hired Fontaine in 1920 to design a fifth floor for Mill No. 2, a building that he had designed a decade earlier. Around the same time, the company built a modest-sized, 1½-story Guest House at the southwest corner of the mill property. Although somewhat eclectic in its influences, it was designed predominantly in a Georgian Revival style. Located next to a NYNH&H rail spur (since removed), the building's west wall was angled to conform to the alignment of a concrete railroad embankment. In 1922, Lafayette hired Fontaine to design an elaborately detailed, Second Empire-style, 1½-story Second Office Building. During the period of construction, office functions were carried out in the Guest House and the 1911 office (see Figure 1).

In 1922-3, the company erected Mill No. 4, a brick, 4-story mill building with a curved front to conform to the alignment of that part of Hamlet Avenue at the southwest corner of the property. The Guest House, to its immediate west, was dwarfed by this construction. By 1925, the complement of machinery at Lafayette Worsted had expanded to 90 worsted combs, 32 cards, and 54,000 spindles manned by 800 operatives. The 1930 Federal Census noted 24 woolen and worsted mills in Woonsocket employing over 7,500 in the operation of over 250,000 spindles and 1,600 looms.<sup>16</sup> Despite this optimistic picture, troubles loomed for Woonsocket's second industrial revolution.

At the close of the First World War, Lafayette Worsted found itself in a long-term conflict with the Federal Government over \$168,000 in 1918-9 tax assessments ruled--to the company's satisfaction--to be excessive in 1923. Although the full amount of the overpayment was refunded to the company at that time, the Federal Government determined shortly after that its refund had been in error. The company paid back the full amount but chose to fight the reassessment in U.S. District Court, which decided in Lafayette's favor in 1933. The Federal Government successfully appealed the decision through the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later that year.

As the final chapter of the tax conflict was playing itself out in this country, Auguste and Louis Lepoutre, the two key representatives of the Lepoutre family interests in Roubaix, died in 1935. In the settlement of their estates, the Lafayette Worsted holdings in the United States were divided in 1936 into two companies. The heirs of Auguste Lepoutre, reorganized as the Lafayette Worsted Spinning Company, acquired the first and second mill as well as related buildings and the heirs of Louis Lepoutre, operating under the name Argonne Worsted,<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Source: Charles Carroll, *Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy* (Vol. II, p. 866).

<sup>17</sup> The new company was likely named in recognition of the huge American losses in the Argonne area during World War I. Over 14,000 American dead are buried at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, most of whom were killed during the Meuse-Argonne offensive (September-November 1918).



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acquired the third mill, the Guest House and the Second Office Building (see Figure 4). Both companies continued worsted manufacture.

The 1950s saw massive closings of Woonsocket textile and textile-related companies. By 1954, the twin forces of southern competition and union unrest brought about the closings of the Guerin Mills, Riverside Worsted, Blackstone Cotton, and the Clinton Mill, among others. This already difficult situation was compounded by a disastrous flood on the Blackstone River in August 1955. After tropical storm Diane raised the waters of the Blackstone River 15 feet above flood level, many mill owners decided to close, rather than address massive flood damage. A new company, Lafayette Worsted Spinning Company, and a related company, Lafayette General Construction, continued in operation until 1967. Argonne Worsted continued its operation on Hamlet Avenue until the company relocated to Manville in 1960.

### **Recent History**

Subsequent tenants of the former Lafayette Worsted plant have included Miller Electric, American Copper Sponge Co. (later, ACS Industries) and a number of smaller companies. Although directory listings do not make clear specific use of the Second Office Building, physical evidence remaining in the building suggests administrative use into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

By 1950, Argonne Worsted was using the Guest House for storage. After 1960, it remained vacant for a period and was then used for a few years as storage for nearby Roger's Restaurant. By 2007, it appears that both buildings were vacant. The City of Woonsocket demolished all of the Lafayette Worsted industrial buildings in 2008 to facilitate the construction of a new middle school campus, leaving only the two administrative buildings that are the subject of this nomination.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

### Articles:

“Hamlet guardhouse [sic] returns to service.” *Woonsocket Call* (3 November 2016).

### Books:

Bicknell, Thomas W. *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations: Biographical*. New York, NY: The American Historical Society, Inc. 1920.

Hall, J.D., Editor. *Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Businessmen of Rhode Island*. Providence: J.D. Hall and Co., 1901.

Thomas, Alton P. *Woonsocket: Highlights of History*. Woonsocket, RI: Woonsocket Opera House Society, 1976.

*Woonsocket: People from the Past*. Woonsocket, RI: Woonsocket Historical Society, 2015.

### Unpublished materials:

Edgar J. Allaire notes. On file, Woonsocket Harris Public Library.

*Records of the Architectural Office of Walter F. Fontaine (1900-1922)*  
Photocopy of MSS on file, Rhode Island Historical Society.

### Government Documents:

Kulik, Gary and Julia Bonham. *Rhode Island: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites*. Washington, DC: Historic American Engineering Record, 1978.

*Statewide Preservation Report P-W-1. Woonsocket, Rhode Island*.  
Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1976.

*The Book of Rhode Island*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island State Bureau of Information, 1930.

### Maps and Drawings Consulted

Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative  
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*Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1903, 1911, 1922, 1950, 1955.*

*City of Woonsocket, District Plat Maps No. 211 and No. 300.*  
On file, Woonsocket City Engineer's Office.

*Lafayette Worsted Company.* Factory Mutual Drawing No. 15104, March 8, 1922.

*Brewster Investments Corp.* Factory Mutual Drawing, December 15, 1964.

*ACS Industries.* Factory Mutual Drawing, August 10, 1965.  
On file, Woonsocket City Engineer's Office.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Recorded by Rhode Island Historic Resources Archive, WOON-0001 (2008)

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.55 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 292884 | Northing: 4653073 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District are contiguous with those of Woonsocket Assessor's Map 27, Lot 172.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries represent the subdivision of a larger 6-acre parcel representing all of the original Lafayette Worsted Company plant. This parcel contains both the Guest House and the Second Office Building and is separate from the larger, adjoining parcel upon which the Woonsocket Middle School now stands.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Edward Connors  
organization: Edward Connors & Associates  
street & number: 39 Dyer Avenue  
city or town: Riverside state: RI zip code: 02915  
e-mail nconnors@cox.net  
telephone: 401 595-0699  
date: January 2017

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**Additional Documentation**

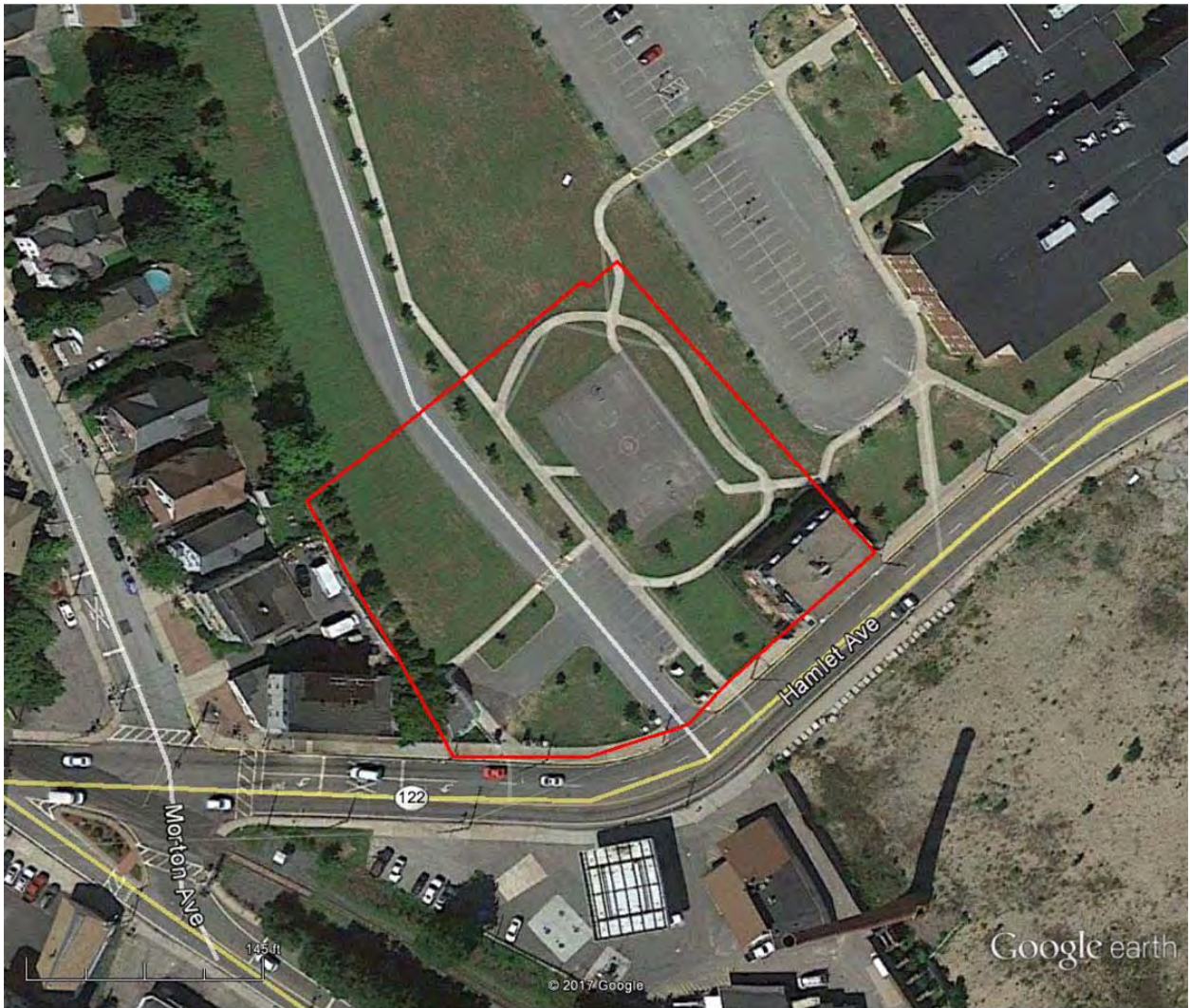
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Location Map



Google earth

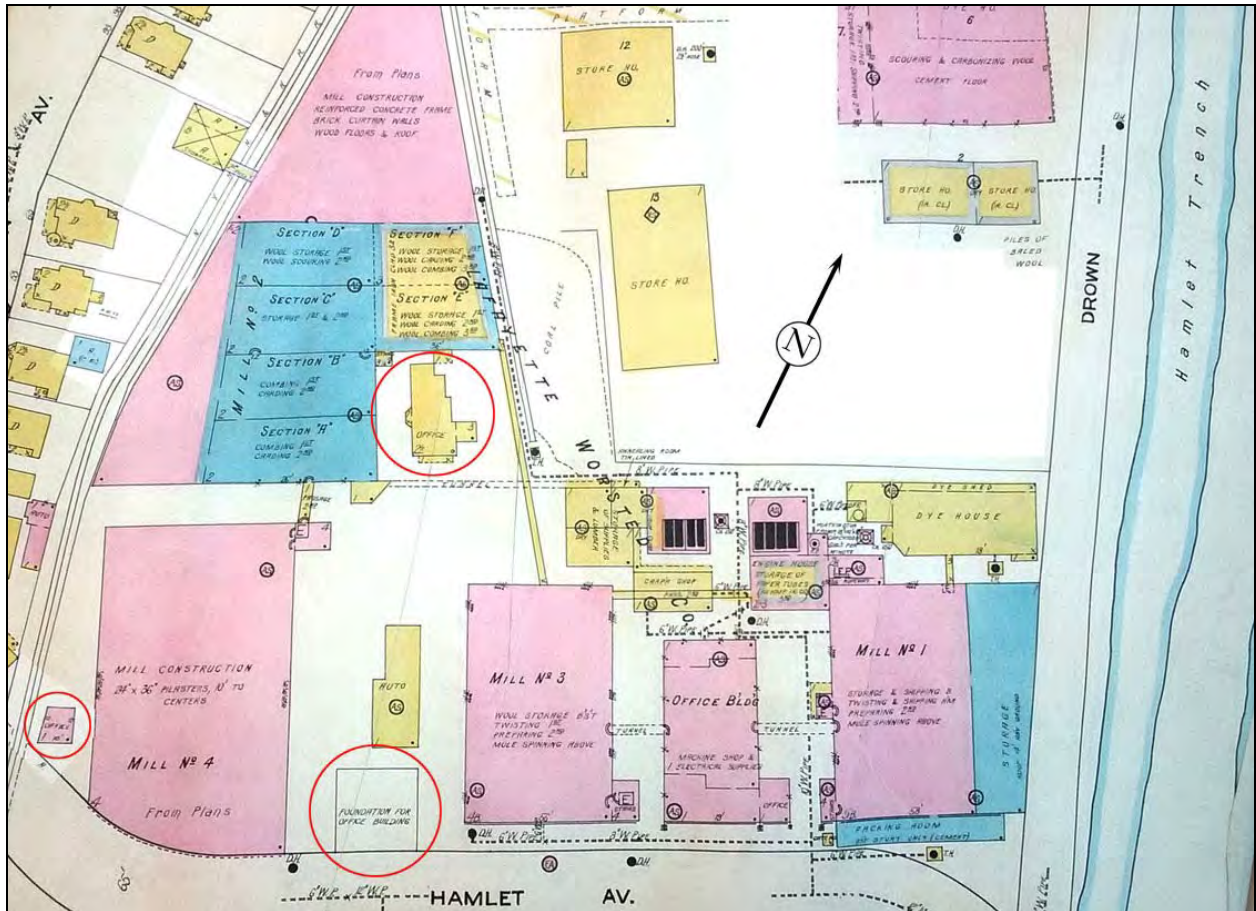
feet 300  
meters 100



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### Additional Information

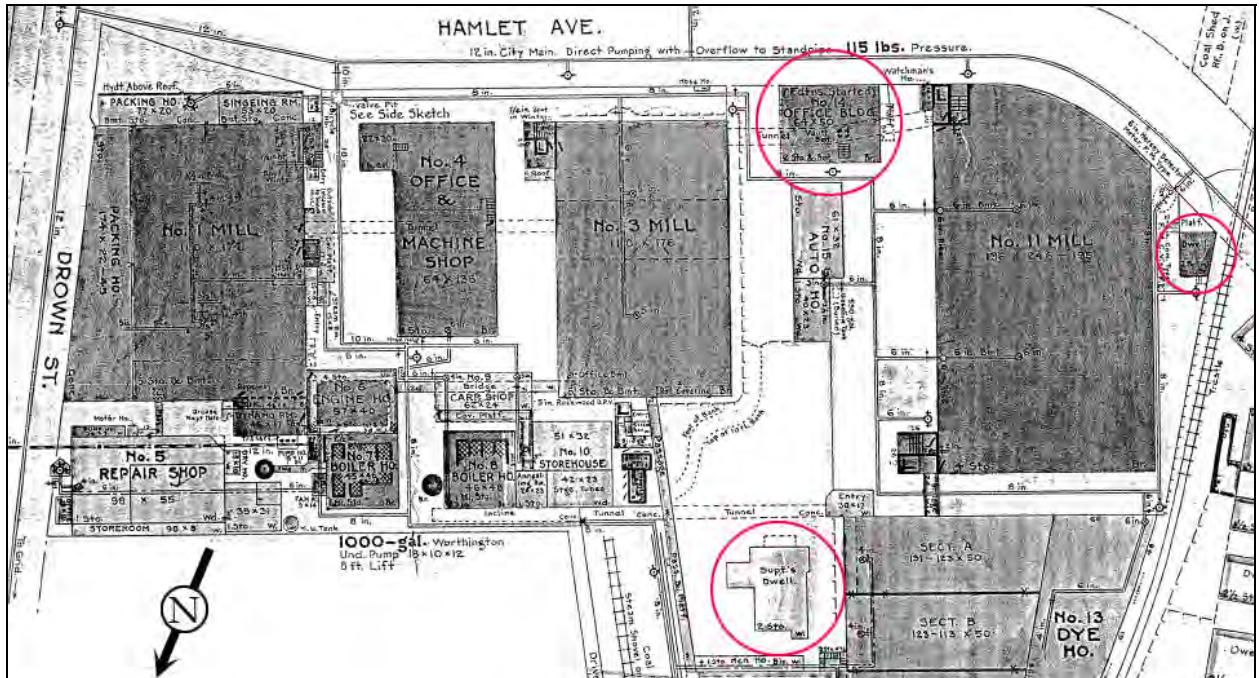


**Figure 1**

Detail from 1922 Sanborn Map showing (l-r, circled) new Guest House used temporarily as “Office;”  
“Foundation for [Second] Office Building;” and, to rear,  
former Frank Harris Mansion used as “Office.”

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**Figure 2**

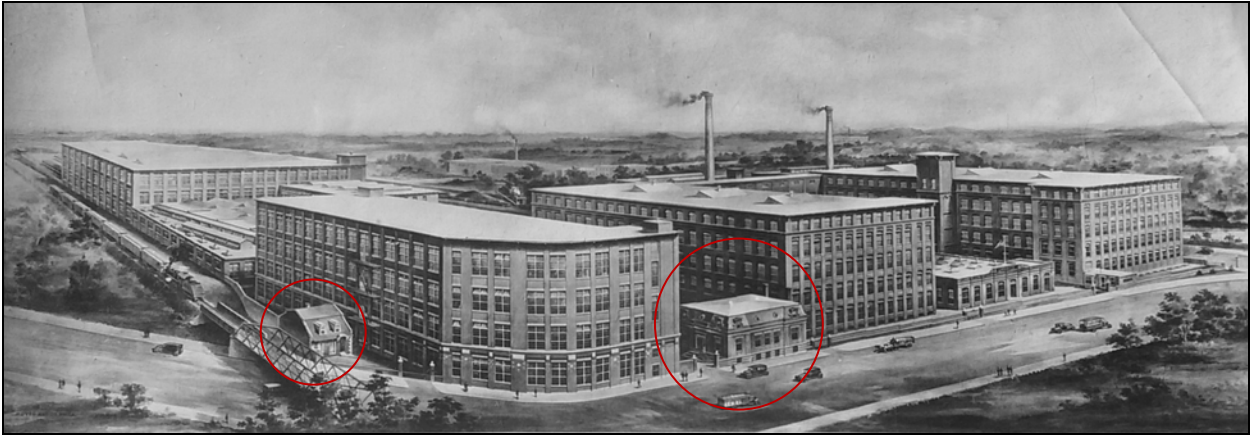
Detail from 1922 Factory Mutual drawing 15104 noting (circled): “foundations started” on Second Office, completed Guest House labeled as “Dwelling,” and former Harris Mansion labeled as “Superintendent’s Dwelling.”

*Note tunnel (dotted line) extending westerly from Mill No. 1 through Machine Shop, Mill No. 3, sub-basement of Second Office to terminus at Mill No. 11 (labeled Mill No. 4 in Figure 1).*



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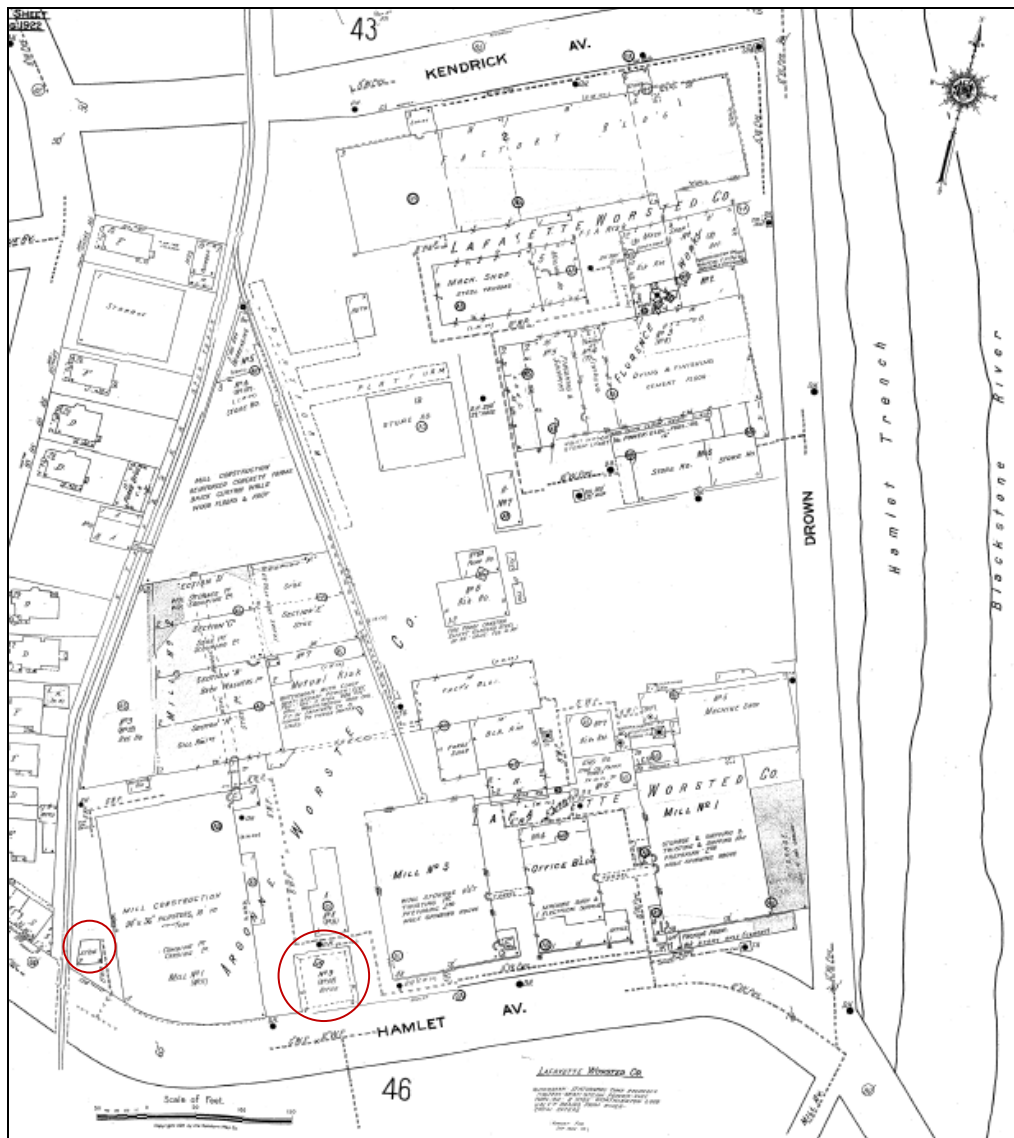


**Figure 3**

Engraving of the Lafayette Worsted Company complex at its fullest expansion, ca 1930  
View to northeast showing (circled) Guest House at left near rail bridge and  
Second Office Building at right between Mills No. 4 (left) and 2 (right). View facing northeast.  
*Courtesy, Woonsocket Historical Society*

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**Figure 4**

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map (1950)  
showing full extent of original Lafayette Worsted Company plant as subdivided after 1936  
and occupied by Argonne Worsted Company and Lafayette Worsted Spinning Company.  
Second Office Building and Guest House (used as Argonne storage) are circled.

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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District

City or Vicinity: Woonsocket

County: Providence County

State: Rhode Island

Photographer: Edward Connors

Date Photographed: multiple: see below

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 29

Context view of Guest House (left) and Second Office (right), camera facing east.

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

2 of 29

Context view of Guest House (left) and Second Office (right), camera facing west.

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

3 of 29

Guest House: façade and east elevation, with Guest House Fence, camera facing west.

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

4 of 29

Guest House: façade, camera facing northwest

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

5 of 29

Guest House: west elevation (left) and façade (right), camera facing northeast

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

6 of 29

Guest House: door hood and dormer detail, camera facing northwest

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

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Guest House: front room, camera facing northeast

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

8 of 29

Guest House: kitchen cabinets and sink, camera facing north

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

9 of 29

Guest House: first floor hall to stairway and landing, camera facing northwest

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

10 of 29

Guest House: northeast bedroom, camera facing south

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

11 of 29

Second Office: west (left) and southeast (right) elevation with Woonsocket Middle School in  
the distance, camera facing northeast

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

12 of 29

Second Office: south (Hamlet Avenue) elevation, camera facing northwest

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

13 of 29

Second Office: north elevation, camera facing southeast

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

14 of 29

Second Office: east elevation, camera facing southwest

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

15 of 29

Second Office: main entrance and stairway detail, camera facing southeast

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

16 of 29

Second Office: typical window and brickwork detail, east elevation, camera facing southwest

Date Photographed: 25 February 2017

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Second Office: *ovale debout* window and slate roof, south elevation, camera facing northeast  
Date Photographed: 16 March 2017

18 of 29

Second Office: view from lobby to front entrance, camera facing southwest  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

19 of 29

Second Office: reception booth in lobby, camera facing northeast  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

20 of 29

Second Office: lobby view northeast to side wall of reception booth (at right) and double-leaf doorway to main hall  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

21 of 29

Second Office: view in hallway to executive bathroom, camera facing northeast  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

22 of 29

Second Office: south Executive Office, camera facing southeast  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

23 of 29

Second Office: south Middle Room, camera facing southeast  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

24 of 29

Second Office: dumbwaiter in North Middle Office, camera facing south  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

25 of 29

Second Office: view south from North Middle Office to hallway, camera facing south  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

26 of 29

Second Office: second floor hallway, camera facing southwest  
Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

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27 of 29

Second Office: second floor northeast room, camera facing northeast

Date Photographed: 15 December 2016

28 of 29

Guest House Fence: segment from foundation of Guest House to southeast, camera facing  
northwest

Date Photographed: 27 February 2017

29 of 29

Fence/Wall at Second Office: segment from southeast corner of Second Office to east, view  
southeast

Date Photographed: 27 February 2017

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.













































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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/23/2017      Date of Pending List: 7/18/2017      Date of 16th Day: 8/2/2017      Date of 45th Day: 8/7/2017      Date of Weekly List: 8/11/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      8/7/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall      Discipline Historian

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House • 150 Benefit Street • Providence, R.I. 02903-1209

TEL (401) 222-2678

FAX (401) 222-2968

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Website [www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)



June 21, 2017

Mr. J. Paul Loether  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Lafayette Worsted Company Administrative Headquarters Historic District at 134 and 148 Hamlet Avenue in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, to the National Register of Historic Places.

Notification procedures required by law have been followed. The nomination has been reviewed by the Rhode Island Review Board and approved.

Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1980, as State Historic Preservation Officer for Rhode Island, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

For Edward F. Sanderson  
State Historic Preservation Officer

enclosure